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THE THEOSOPHICAL FORUM.

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Each member can send questions, answers to questions, opinions, and notes upon Theosophical subjects. When necessary, the various communications will be condensed by the editor. Members will be careful to write on only one side of the paper and to use black ink.

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QUESTION XVIII.

Is it possible by a strong desire before sleep to receive from the Higher Self in dream an answer to questions respecting right thought and conduct?

D. L. W.—The reason I ask is that the other evening, thinking deeply on how I could best work for Theosophy, I fell asleep wishing, "Oh that my Higher Self would show me my duty clearly!" In sleep I had that night a vivid impression, apparently from outside myself, that I should perfect myself in knowledge so as to impart it to others. Why is it not possible to be thus helped in our sleep when all is quiet and the body inactive?

W. Q. J.—This question is one of deep importance to those who are in earnest. My answer to it would be "yes." Bulwer Lytton says, in the "Strange Story," that man's first initiation comes in dreams. In the Book of Job it is written (c. iv, 12.13): "Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when *deep* sleep falleth on men." And (c. xxxiii, 14): "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, *when deep sleep falleth upon*

men, in slumberings upon the bed." The state spoken of in Job is the same as that called *Sushupti* by the Hindus. Man has three principal states or conditions—waking, dreaming, and dreamless or deep slumber. In the last it is held that communion is enjoyed with the Spirit, and that the inner man returning or changing from that condition goes into a dream, short or long, from which he changes into the waking state. The influences of *Sushupti* are highly spiritual. They are common to all men. The greatest villain on the earth, as well as the most virtuous man, goes into Sushupti and receives benefit from it. If it were not so, wickedness would triumph in the earth through the overpowering influence of the body and its constant downward tendency. Now, if this is believed and the reality of the Higher Self admitted, it follows from what is called *the mysterious power of meditation* that a sincerely devoted man who earnestly calls upon the Higher Self for aid in right conduct will receive in the dream state that succeeds the condition of Sushupti the aid asked for. In other words, one can make the dream impressions received out of the highest—or Sushupti—state more clear and valuable than is usual with those who think nothing about it. But the questions asked and impressions desired must be high and altruistic, because the Higher Self has no concern with material things nor with any temporal affairs. This power will of course vary with each man according to his nature and the various combinations between his physical, astral, and psychical planes.

QUESTION XIX.

Why should victims of accidental death share the fate of suicides or even worse? (*See* PATH, *Aug.*, *p.* 135.)

N. S.—In dealing with this question sentiment must be left out of sight, for sentiment has not much to do with it. If we have facts to deal with we must proceed upon those. So it results—on the facts—that in the case of suicide the body is violently separated from the other "principles," which have no time to disintegrate. With accidental death it is precisely the same fact that is presented. Therefore whatever results upon

other planes from this *fact* of sudden separation must be the same in both cases. The "principles" going to make up a man have a certain term during which cohesion keeps them together,—the body being an important element in the case. When the natural end of life draws near, the "principles" begin to separate; before that they are held together as in a vise. Given that we suddenly destroy the body in which they operate, that is merely made an end of, leaving the "astral remains" cohering together because the *destructive weapon could not reach them.* Hence the fate of being in earth's sphere until *their* time of separation arrives. To be a complete suicide, then, one must know how to use a weapon that will kill not only the body but also the other man just inside. There is no more injustice in this, if it be the law, than that the explosion of nitro-glycerine will destroy the innocent child standing near. [See *Secret Doctrine* and *The Key to Theosophy* on post-mortem states; also *Path* for November.]

Ans.—In deciding between the different theories of the conditions of the life after death, one has to use the same rational faculty as is used upon theories of life before death. Any theory which contravenes an instinctive sense of justice, much more which contravenes the trained and delicate judicial faculty, will be rejected by it. The theory which puts the everlasting welfare of the victims of accidental death at the disposition of mediums—a class rarely cultured or high principled, and usually mercenary; a class, moreover, singularly ill-adapted to exercise either power or discrimination—is one which the judicial sense would naturally distrust as not consonant with *a priori* considerations of the fitness of things or with very obvious Karmic conditions. Endless difficulties beset us when we vacate the doctrine of destiny as the consequence of character, and hand over destiny to the determination of any personal will,—divine, angelic, or human. These would be enormously increased if we supposed such determination to be committed to a class of people ordinarily with diseased bodies and defective morals. (*Key to Theosophy*, p. 195.) No one could be blamed, least of all by Theosophists, for holding that Nature provides for the

appropriate future experience of those who have died from whatever cause, and places it quite beyond reach or interference by those who are still on earth and have their own destiny to shape. At the same time, it is very proper that all theories and conceptions of the post-mortem, as of this, life should have free hearing. Truth has nothing to fear from discussion, and the very effort to discriminate trains the judgment, the moral sense, and the sense of justice. One of the merits of Theosophy is its repudiation of the term "orthodoxy," and another is its frank avowal that "right thinking" is achieved through self-training, not by an imposition from authority.

QUESTION XX.

Do the seven Root Races discussed in the second volume of the SECRET DOCTRINE *begin and end their course on this Globe* (*i. e., on Globe D in the fourth Round*) *before humanity appears on Globe E? Was there a like course of Seven Races on Globe C; and are we to expect a like course on Globe E, and so on through the chain?*

B.—As I understand the doctrine and also the law of correspondences, Globe D—our earth—is the one on which the turning point is reached. Hence on any other globe humanity would not be as it is on this. But on each one of the chain the Ego must go through seven races or states or conditions of development peculiar to the globe upon which the incarnation takes place. It seems also to have been clearly stated that the Egos on this globe *must* go through the seven races peculiar to it, or, what is just the same thing, must go through the quantity of experience which is equal to what would be acquired by remaining through the seven races to the end. It is quite possible, however, that there may be Egos on globes beyond this one who have got there by virtue of their power and force which has carried them apparently beyond us; but in reality they have only hurried their development and, in effect, have gone through the experience of the entire seven races of our globe—those gone and the two to come. The same general law must hold good for each globe of any chain.

QUESTION XXI.

It is authoritatively stated in ESOTERIC BUDDHISM *that the Hindoo Race is the most spiritually developed now existing,—as the Anglo-Saxon is the most highly developed intellectually. Are we, then, to understand that the Hindoo Race has in the past experienced an intellectual state analogous to that of the present state of the Anglo-Saxon, and with it a similar material prosperity, and that the present Hindoo civilization, including caste, as the fruit of a higher development—the spiritual, is, upon the whole, preferable to that of the Anglo-Saxon?*

Ananda.—1. *Esoteric Buddhism* is no more "authoritative" than any other book. The statements in it are not binding on any one but the author.

2. The conclusion, at the end of the question, about caste system does not follow from the premises if their affirmative were granted.

3. According to the general law of racial development we are to assume that the Hindu nation, ages ago, passed through an era similar to our own present one. Further than this, historical and archæological *facts* show this to be so, for the ruins alone in India point to an enormous extent of material progress in her past, and all through the Indian literature is proof tending to the same end.

4. But the present degraded form of caste is not due to the "spirituality" of the Hindu. Caste to-day is not the caste of the ages when prosperity reigned; and there is as much "caste" now in Europe and America as there is in India, although not given that name. The true castes will always exist. They are four: the teacher (Brahmin); the warrior (Kshatriya); the merchant (Vaisya); and the servant (Sudra). In the ancient days the people changed caste when they actually changed their nature; but now the divisions are fixed by custom—not by spiritual law—and are innumerable.

5. As Indian civilization is now in its decadence, it certainly is not preferable to that of the Anglo-Saxon, since the latter has the elements of improvement in it. But if the present Western civilization is fixed and not to change, then, in my

opinion, annihilation were preferable. The Hindu nation being very ancient, it must have distinct traces of its old-time glory; the Anglo-Saxon is in comparison quite new, and the greater part of its past is crude and brutal. Hence it is natural that the Hindu has more potential metaphysical and spiritual power in its corporeal frame than the Anglo-Saxon. What the actual psychic endowments of either are can only be told by an Adept, for the science and statistics of the day do not deal with or record anything but the physical inheritance. The questioner should never forget that each nation, like each man, has its own particular psychical inheritance, which may or may not be the same as the physical one.

QUESTION XXII.

Do the Masters know one's earnest desires and thoughts? I desire to become a chela in my next incarnation. What effect will it have upon my condition and environment in that life? Is my desire forgotten or lost, or is there record made of it?

Ans.—No one can fix limits to a Master's knowledge, or state whether or not He notes the aspirations in the heart of any particular child of humanity, But the matter is unimportant, because the means by which aspirations develop into actualities are the subject of Law, and are provided for in the very constitution of being. It is better that processes of growth, strengthening, and adaptation should be inherent parts of a system, than that they should be committed to any external hands, however wise and pure. The presence of those hands *at a later date* may be itself a part of that system.

To expand. When a spiritual purpose in a man's mind becomes at all definite and strong, it begins to mould his principles and life. Two desires arise,—the desire for larger knowledge, and the desire for spiritual attainment. The first impels to reading and to the solution of such intellectual doubts or problems as may be encountered on the way; the second impels to the sternest mastery over self and its beguilements, and to the vigorous execution of every known duty. As these proceed, there gradually comes about a purification, a refining, a devel-

opment of the whole being,—in short, a transmutation from every-day humanity with its appropriate tastes, interests, and motives, to spiritualized humanity with the different tastes, interests, and motives appropriate to it. The man is steadily transformed.

Of course the extent of the transformation depends upon the continuity and vigor of the purpose, and upon the length of the particular incarnation. A desire for chelaship may be an incident in it. That desire does not of itself evidence advance, for it may be a selfish eagerness for powers and not a yearning after Wisdom. If the latter, it is an indication of health, and it is also one of the forces at work.

The assured result of this transformation is that the man *is himself preparing his next incarnation.* It is not that his desire is registered and then ticketed away, to be brought out at the end of Devachan by some functionary and a fit environment assigned to the reincarnating spirit, but that the whole course of his acts and thoughts and disciplines and efforts is moulding for him the very condition into which it is right for him to be placed. In other words, *Karma* has the matter in its unerring charge. His new environment will be exactly such as expresses the facilities to which he has established a claim and the experiences of which he still has need. If the desire for chelaship was genuine and his other qualifications make him ripe for it, that possibility too will be provided for. He will be born into circumstances wherefrom that opportunity will arise.

Whatever may be true of the knowledge or action of Masters heretofore, we are safe in saying that at this point They take cognizance of him. He is not any more fit and anxious for progress than They are fit and anxious to help him in it. And so, after the ways which They understand and the laws which They observe, the needful conditions are brought about and the customary process begun.

Aspirants mistake when they project their gaze afar off to Tibet, or speculate as to what may be thought of or about them by Those who are engaged in continental tasks. Their eyes had better be turned inward upon a diagnosis of motive and condition. It is not of much moment that a man should attract

the attention of a Master, but it is vital that he should have a life so pure and a purpose so real that a Master would approve them if He saw them. These are the things whereon he can and should expend every energy, and so long as he has a fault unconquered or a weakness unbraced, any question as to a Master's interest is premature. The conception of a Master is inspiring and ennobling; it is a fit theme for meditation; but the image would lose some of its dignity and much of its power if we drew it within our aura as a personal guide. The interest of Masters is not excited by appealing to Them, but by mounting to that plane of character whereon They dwell and whereon other dwellers are sure in time to be encountered by Them. And perhaps it is not too much to say that an eagerness to meet Masters—very natural in the incipient stages of Theosophic purpose—lessens as the aspirant becomes more fitted to meet Them, for that ambition, like others, fades before the brighter aim of an altruistic life.

W. Q. J.—The effect of a desire to become a chela in the next incarnation will be to place one where the desire may be probably realized. Its effect on the next condition and environment depends on so many things that no definite reply could be given. If the desire be held determinedly and unceasingly, the goal is brought nearer, bnt that also brings up *all* the karma of the past, thus precipitating an immense conflict on the individual: a conflict which when once begun has only two ways of ending, one, total defeat, the other, success; there is no halfway. As Dante wrote, "Who enters here leaves hope behind." Therefore, in general, the next life, or rather the life of a chela, while full of noble possibilities, is a constant battle from beginning to end. As to times and periods, it is said in the East that when the probationary chela steps on the path he will reach a goal in seven births thereafter.

QUESTION XXIII.

What ultimate compensation am I to receive for entire renunciation of self and the world?

Ans.—The question seems to imply two misconceptions of Theosophy,—1st, that Theosophy urges asceticism, 2d, that it does so as a remunerative investment. We need not so understand the system.

Rather should one say that the repudiation of patriotic, family, and social duties is discountenanced in the case of all who owe such, and that the very first injunction of the Wisdom-Religion is the performance to the uttermost of every obligation arising from the circumstances wherein karma has placed a man. If he renounces his duties, does he not also renounce the blessing attached to faithful performance of them?

Let us approach the subject of disconnection from the world upon an entirely different path. A boy at school enjoys marbles and foot-ball. As his mind matures and his interests enlarge, he reads the daily papers and various literary works, and he finds recreation in billiards or whist. He does not have to fight an inclination to play marbles; the inclination has vanished as more mature interests have supplanted it. He grows still older, and these interests are succeeded by those of married life. There is no combat with old desires when he picks up a juvenile novel or sees a billiard cue; the desires no longer exist.

Very well; it is so too in the spiritual development. As interest in the loftiest topics and pursuits pervades the being, it steadily displaces interest in such as are lower and transient. Old desires do not necessarily appear base or hateful or unworthy. They were appropriate enough to the then stage of growth, but the new stage is higher and more advanced, and the desires appropriate to *it* are in action. A man thrilled with conceptions of his dormant faculties and eager to promote the uplifting of all humanity is not incessantly at war with an impulse after delicate dinners or fashionable dances,—they simply do not appeal to him. What "renunciation" of an evening ball would there be to a philosopher who was absorbed in study and eager for new truth? As, then, the vision of a developing

Theosophist broadens and is more piercing, the ephemeral nature of most ambitions becomes apparent, and he loses wish for them or for their pursuit. It is not the deliberate cultivation of an ascetic habit; it is the natural growth of a finer taste.

The gradual uplifting during which steadily weaken the cords tying a man to material interests is of necessity very prolonged and means many incarnations. It is a process, not an act. Yet there comes at last an incarnation expressive of the fact that he has ripened for a sphere above the social. But how is the propriety of his transfer to it evidenced? Obviously by his having no binding ties or duties here, and hence by no one's being injured through his transfer. Karma looks after all that, and prepares for him an incarnation so circumstanced as to authorize the renunciation of the world. Damodar's is a case in point. But do you know anybody situated as he? If not, you know no one qualified for the renunciation. No one need ask himself whether he should make it so long as any one else needs him here. The incarnation for it has not yet come.

If this is the true view, the question as to "ultimate compensation" need never arise in a human mind. Imagine Mr. Edison asking himself, "What ultimate compensation am I to have if I refrain from playing top in the alley and instead thereof spend the day in my laboratory?" Yet this is much the same thing as a man's saying, "What ultimate compensation am I to have if I expend my careers on the highest planes of intellect and spirit, and consent to give up my race horses and my wine?" It shows that he has not the most distant view of the real antithesis.

This whole line of thought applies equally to the matter of "self" as to that of "the world." As higher interests displace lower, the latter die.

QUESTION XXIV.

In the answer given to Question XV last month, some very interesting propositions were brought to light. Intellectual ability was contrasted with zeal for the cause of Truth, and it was shown that the world has often been moved more by the latter than by the

former. Ideas rule the world, and the world's reformers have often been men of one idea. What are we to understand by intellectual ability, and mental cultivation?

J. D.—The one principal obstacle, *viz:* preconception or prejudice, and the one defect, *viz:* weakness of memory, were dwelt on in Question XVI, and shown to be characteristic of the Western mind. There are, however, still deeper considerations involved, that may easily be pointed out. Strength of intellect does not always mean clearness of thought or true perception, and powerful memory may be but another name for a garret full of rubbish. The real power and completeness of the human mind lie in the readiness, ease, and certainty of its operations in the perception of truth and its relations to facts and experiences; and this condition can never be reached except through the love of truth. Those possessing this quality of mind may seem simple-minded. They manifest so little effort or friction, and make so little noise. In such cases the intellect with one hand grasps intuition, with the other it grasps perception, and thus reason attains understanding. The *ego* being in the center of the sphere of man's life, the intellect finds many tangents, beside the echoes and reverberations in the outer circle of man's environment. The soul requires anchorage to truth, or love of truth. Instead of this the mind often finds anchorage in a creed, or to a prejudice, and diffuseness and mere intellectual display—the pyrotechnics of the mind—are mistaken for strength of intellect. The processes and the result of reasoning thus not only fail of good results, but there follow friction and loss of power in the mind or reasoning faculty. There can be no very high development without symmetrical exercise. The mind may and often does thus become diseased, morbid, unbalanced. Some of the greatest intellects have thus become deranged. The reasoning of a child is often more true because its perceptions are unclouded and its desires uncontaminated. "People of culture" may by no means scorn "simple folk," for unreason and over-reason alike lead to obscuration.

Mere arbitrary memory by which the mind seizes and holds

facts or quotations is not only of little value, but is often positively pernicious. The mind may thus become a "crazy quilt," as the ladies would say, made up of all sorts of fragments of other people's minds, without coherence and without power. This is by no means the memory referred to in the answer to Question XVI. The value and relation of things once heard or read is there meant. It is the substance rather than the form that is thus preserved and held as available at all times, leaving the mind not only untrammeled, but stronger, better fortified, and with conscious power.

Mental power, or intellectual cultivation in the strictest and highest sense, is thus inseparable from love of truth and loyalty to its service. Without this love and loyalty, the mind is a snare and the results are simply *maya*.

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